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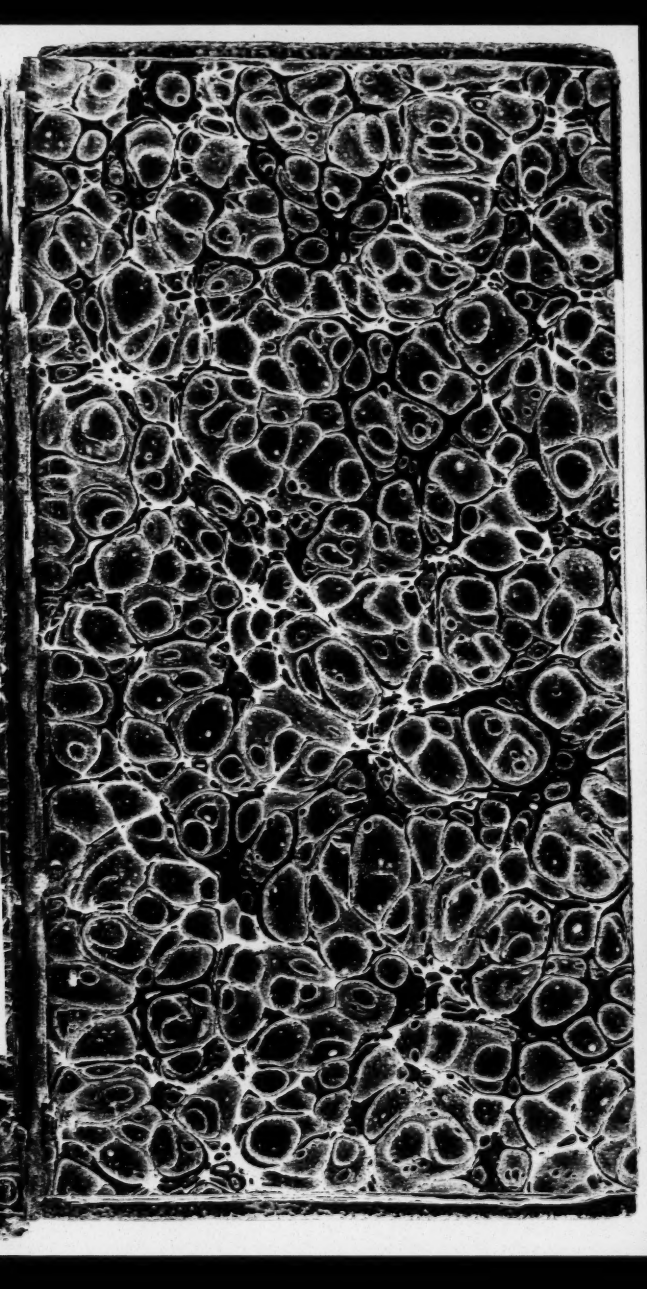

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A

LITTLE HANDFUL

of

Cordial Comforts,

Scattered thorowout several Answers, to sixteen Questions and Objections following.

Intended chiefly for the good of those that walk mournfully before God;

And are worthy to be gathered up, and regarded, of all such as wish well to their own Peace.

By RICHARD STANDFAST, Mr. of Arts, and Rector of *Christs-Church* in *Bristol.*

Believe, and Live.

The third Edition.

London, Printed by *J.C.* and are to be sold by *Edw. Thomas*, dwelling in Green Arbor. 1657

A little Handful OF Cordial Comforts,

Scattered thorowout several *Answers* to certain *Questions* and *Objections* following.

The first Question.

OH wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the wrath to come? for my sins are many, and mine iniquity is great; and if the Lord

should deal with me according to his justice and my deserts, my portion must needs be in the Lake of fire with th Devil and his Angels. For the Scripture pronounceth every man cursed, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the Law, to do them. Gal. 3. 10. *Shew me therefore, (I beseech you) shew me, what course to take, to come out of this misery; shew me the way how to get the pardon of my sin, and the favour of Gōd. I care for nothing but this, neither is there any thing in the world, that I do desire, in comparison of this.*

Answer.

This is that (indeed) which of all other things doth most concern us. For upon the pardon of our sins, & peace with God, depends all solid comfort while we are here, and the eternal salvation of our most precious souls hereafter. And therefore for our better both direction and consolation in this behalf, let us take notice of this that follows.

There is a way for men to come out of the misery of sin, and to obtain and enjoy the mercy and favour of Almighty God, and that is

faith in Christ: this is the way, and there is none but this; neither is there any thing in the world, that can help us to the pardon of our sins, to the love of God, and to the salvation of our souls, but onely *faith in the Lord Jesus*.

That this is the way, is apparent enough by the answer which was given by *Paul* and *Silas*, *Act.* 16.31. for when the keeper of the Prison cryed out with trembling, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* they made him this answer, *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.* There is in *Christ* sufficiency enough, for the ob-

obtaining of our pardon, and the procuring of our peace; and there is in faith ability enough to make us partakers of *Chriſts* ſufficiency. *Chriſt* is the onely way whereby we come unto eternal life, and *faith* is the only way whereby we come to be partakers of *Chriſt*; by faith we come unto *Him*, and through *Him* unto God.

And that we may the better know, that there is in *Chriſt* ſufficiency enough for the pardon of our ſins, and the ſalvation of our ſouls, let us conſider a little both who *Chriſt* is, and alſo what he hath done for the working out of our deliverance,

and the procuring of our peace.

The Lord *Jesus Christ* is the eternal Son of *God*, who pitying that sinful and miserable condition, whereinto we were all brought by the disobedience of our first Parent, undertook to mediate the matter betwixt God and us, and to reconcile us again unto God. For the better effecting of which great work, He came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin *Mary*, and was made man, yea in all things like unto other men, save onely in sin, that so he might the better make us free from all sin.

ſin. Being found thus in faſhion as a man, he ſet himſelf in our ſtead, and for us men, and our ſalvation, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. And by his *obedience* and *death* He hath perfectly alone by himſelf accompliſhed *whatever* was requiſite for our ſalvation.

The wretchedneſs of our condition is briefly this. We all like Sheep have gone aſtray, neither have we only *omitted* thoſe duties, which the Law requires, but we have alſo *committed* thoſe evils, which the Law forbids; & as the *want of righteouſneſs* doth exclude us from

the favour of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven: so the *guiltiness of sin* doth expose us to the wrath of God, and the damnation of Hell. But the Lord *Jesus Christ* hath fulfilled all *righteousness*. For in his life he performed as much *obedience*, as the Law in rigour could exact; and by suffering death upon the Cross, he under-went as much *punishment*, as could be required of sinners, in the severity of justice: and so by his *death* and *obedience* hath he provided against our double misery. For by his *sufferings* upon the Cross the justice of God is satisfied, and his wrath ap-

appeaſed; and by his *obedience* the Law is fulfilled, and we are accepted. And as by his *death* comes the pardon of ſin, and deliverance from wrath: ſo by his *obedience* comes the imputation of righteouſneſs, and life everlaſting. All which as they were done in our nature, ſo they were done for us, and in our behalf, he ſtood in the place of ſinners, that we might be numbered among the righteous; he took our ſins upon him, that he might put his obedience upon us; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, that with his ſtripes we may be healed; he was made a curſe

curſe for us, that he might redeem us from it; he was made ſin for us, that knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him: 2 *Cor.* 5.22.

And the better to aſſure us that by his death upon the Croſs, there was paid a price ſufficient enough for the procuring of our pardon, he aroſe again from the dead; which he could not have done, if the juſtice of God had not been ſatisfied to the very full in every particular. For as ſin is the ſting of death, and the onely thing that makes death terrible: ſo it is the ſtrength of death, and it is that onely

that

that doth give death dominion over us: ſin is the lock, and bar and bolt, that makes faſt the gates of death; and as the door cannot be opened to let out a priſoner, till the bar be removed: ſo there is no eſcaping from death, until ſin be taken out of the way. *Chriſt* therefore by riſing from the dead hath mightily declared unto us, that he hath paid the utmoſt Farthing of our debts, and that by his death he hath fully ſatisfied the juſtice of God. So that now, by vertue of his ſufferings, the *greateſt* ſins are made pardonable, and there is a way ſet open for the *worſt* ſinners, both

both to grace and glory. *I say*, even for the *worst* sinners. There is *no man* now that can deny himself to be *capable* of grace; there are too many, who from the greatness of Gods mercy, do without any cause presume to sin: but there is no man, who from the heinousness of his sins hath any just cause to despair of mercy: for though our sins be many, yet the mercies of God are more; though they be great, yet his mercies are above them; he is rich in mercy, yea, his mercy is infinite, so that though he have spent much mercy already upon our fore-fathers, yet he hath

mercy

mercy enough in ſtore for us alſo; with him there is plenty of forgiveneſs, and his mercy endureth for ever: and the merits of *Chriſt* are of the ſame nature, for he is *mighty to ſave*, and he is the *ſame for ever*, and through the riches of theſe merits of *Chriſt*, there is a way ſet open, even for the *worſt ſinners*, to become partakers of the riches of the mercies of God. Now if *any man* ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, *Jeſus Chriſt* the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins, *&c.* 1 *John* 2. 1,2. And though the time of his abode upon earth in the dayes of his fleſh were but

but ſhort, though his ſufferings were but for a ſeaſon; yet ſuch was, and is the dignity of his perſon, (being the eternal Son of God) that his *ſufferings and obedience* are *infinitely meritorious*, and his blood is able to cleanſe us from *all* unrighteouſneſs: ſo that we may well ſay with the Apoſtle, *Who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that dyed, or rather who is riſen again, and now maketh interceſſion for us*, Rom. 8. 33, 34. But let no man turn this doctrine of comfort to a liberty of ſinning: againſt the *greateſt ſins* there is hopes in *Chriſt* for *penitent believers*. But becauſe there is mercy with

with God, ſhall we therefore go on in ſin? God forbid: there is mercy with him, and therefore he muſt be feared. But if any man ſhall preſume to ſin, becauſe there is mercy with God, through *Jeſus Chriſt*; inſtead of mercy, that man is like to meet with nothing but juſtice: for as merciful as God is, and as all-ſufficient as the death of *Chriſt* is, there is no mercy for ſuch as go on ſtill in their wickedneſs.

And thus you ſee that *Chriſt* is mighty enough to ſave us from all our ſins, and to reconcile us unto *God*: now that we may have benefit by this ſufficiency of *Chriſt*,

Christ, we must lay hold upon it by a lively faith. This is that which unites us unto *Christ*, and makes us one with him; this is that which gives us interest in him, and makes us partakers of his merits; this makes the death and obedience of *Christ* as verily our own, and as effectual for the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls, as if they had been performed by our very selves. So that if we do truly *believe in the Lord Jesus*, then is *God* well pleased with us for his sake; and by vertue of his merits being made ours by faith, our sins are all pardoned, and our souls

ſouls and bodies ſhall be eternally ſaved. And ſo much the Scripture doth plainly teſtifie in ſeveral places. As *John* 3.16. *God* ſo loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten Son, that *whoſoever believeth in him*, ſhould not periſh, but have life everlaſting. And again, *Act.* 10. 43. Through his name *whoſoever believeth in him*, ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins, (be they never ſo many, never ſo hainous.) And again, *Act.* 13. 38, 39. Be it known unto you, that *through this man* is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins. And *by him all that believe* are juſtified from all

thoſe

those things, from which they could not be justified by the law of *Moſes*. By the *law of Moſes* we could never have been acquitted either from the *guiltineſs of ſin*, or *from the wrath of God*: but we are delivered from *both*, by *faith in Chriſt*; for by it we obtain the forgivneſs of our ſins, and the ſalvation of our ſouls.

And thus it is manifeſt, *that* Chriſt *is the way*, *by which we are to obtain the pardon of ſin, and peace with God*; *and that* faith *is the way whereby we are made partakers of the merits of* Chriſt *for our juſtification and ſalvation.* Proceed we now in a word,

to

to ſhew that *nothing but Chriſt* can reconcile us unto *God*, and that *nothing but faith* can make us partakers of *Chriſt* for our reconciliation.

There is no way whereby to come unto *God*, but *onely Chriſt*: it is onely in *Chriſt* that *God* is well pleaſed; neither is there ſalvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved. *Act.* 4.12. Neither is there any other means on our part, whereby to receive *Chriſt*, but *onely faith*; and yet unleſs we do receive him, we get no benefit by him; and therefore unleſs we do believe in him.

we ſhall periſh in our ſins. And to this purpoſe ſpeaks our Saviour, *Joh.*3.36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life; and he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* See the ſum of all this, in that place of S. *John*, 1 *Epiſt.*5. *Chap.*11. 12 & 13 *verſes: God* hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life. Theſe things have I written to you, that believe in the Name of the Son of *God*, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe

in

in the name of the Son of *God.* By which place it is plain, that there is a way to life; that *Christ* is the way to it; that life is so in him, that it is in no other but him; that it is so in him, that by believing in him we obtain life; and that it is so in him, that without believing in him, we get no benefit at all by him. And thus you have the truth of the former answer enlarged and confirmed, according to it's several branches; by which it is manifest, that *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing else but onely faith in him,* can help us to the pardon of sin, the love of God, and the salvation of our souls. Here-

Hereupon it may be thus replyed.

The second Queſtion.

IF I cannot obtain the pardon of my ſins, and the favour of God, without faith *in* Chriſt, *I doubt my condition is woful, and that I am yet in my ſins, and liable unto wrath. For I fear that I have not this faith in Chriſt, and that I do not as yet believe in him. Shew me therefore (I pray you) how I may be comforted againſt this fear, and how I may know whether I do believe in* Chriſt, *yea, or no.*

An-

Answer.

Doubtless if we do not believe in *Christ*, our condition is woful: for there is no salvation *in any other*; and without *faith* in him, we get no be benefit by him, but we are in our sins, and the obligation unto wrath is in full power and force against us. For though the ransome, which Christ paid by his death upon the Cross, be a ransome abundantly sufficient for the sins of the *whole world*; yet the benefit of that death of his is bestow'd on none, but upon such conditions as *God* himself pleaseth:

which conditions, for ſuch as be of years, are *faith* and *repentance*; which if we want, we ſhall be ſure to periſh in our ſins, not out of any defect in *Chriſt*, but onely becauſe we want thoſe conditions, whereby we come to have intereſt in him, and to be partakers of his merits. Now that we may the better know whether we have this faith in us yea, or no, (and ſo neither be deceiv'd with vain hopes, nor yet diſcomforted with falſe fears,) conſider this which follows, and ſee what anſwer you can make to theſe ſeveral demands.

Are you ſenſible of the miſery

misery wherein you are by reason of your sins? and do you find that you need a Saviour? do you know who is the Saviour of the world? do you know in some good measure who Christ is, and what he hath done for us, & what are the benefits that are to be had by him? do you know what a necessity there is of having of him, and what a misery it is to be without him, and what we must do, if we would have any benefit by him? and do you verily *believe* that *Christ Jesus*, and none but he, is the Saviour of the world, & that he hath both done & suffered, as the Scriptures testifie

of him? do you verily believe that there is no way to Heaven but Christ, that there is no way to get Christ but Faith, and that there is no part to be had in him, but by renouncing all other Lords, and all other Saviours, and by adhering *wholly* unto him for all our consolation and salvation? and do you now *desire from the heart* to be made partaker of Christ: and do you *sincerely endeavour to* accept of him, and to embrace him? and can you be content for his sake to forsake all things, and to undergo any misery, rather then part with him? Can you be content to take him (as we say

ſay) *for better for worſe*, and not onely for your *Jeſus*, to ſave you from your ſins, but alſo for your *Lord*, to command and diſpoſe of you at his pleaſure? and is it your care to know his will? and is it your endeavour to yeeld him an *univerſal obedience*? and is it your *practiſe* in obedience unto him, to exerciſe your ſelf to keep a conſcience void of offence both toward *God*, and toward men, and conſtantly and conſcionably to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live godly, and righteouſly, and ſoberly in this preſent world? do you thus *accept* of Chriſt, and *ſubmit* unto

him? nay, is it your *hearty desire and unfained endeavour* so to do? then you may be sure that you have some degrees of true faith in *Jesus* Christ, and therefore that Christ is yours, that *God* is yours, that all is yours. For this is such a qualification as hath the promise, both of the life that now is, and also of that, that is to come.

By these questions we may examine our condition. For after this manner is faith wrought in us; such are the preparatives, such is the nature, and such are the effects of a true faith, as are implyed in these questions; so that if we can in some good mea-

sure

ſure make underſtanding and affectionate anſwers to them all; then we may be ſure that we have a true faith in Chriſt: but if either we know him not, or deſire not to accept of him, or care not to obey him, we have then cauſe to think that we do not believe in him; and if we think otherwiſe, we do but deceive our own ſouls.

Now if upon examination had, we find that we want faith, we muſt be diligent in uſing the means whereby to get it, which is by reading and hearing of the word of God, and conferring about it. For faith commeth by hearing, and hearing by the

word. If we find that we have this faith, we must be careful to keep it, and to increase it, by the word, by the Sacraments, and by prayer.

The third Question.

Upon this that hath been spoken, another question may be raised to this purpose. I do in some measure know who Christ *is, and I do believe that he is a Saviour all-sufficient, and that there is no other way to salvation, but him, and that whosoever believeth in him shal not perish: and I my self would fain believe in him. But how may I know that I have right to believe in him, and that the invi-*

vitations to faith do concern me? how may I know whether I should be welcome, or not, if I should be so bold as to come unto him?

Answer.

For our encouragement herein, and that we may come the more boldly unto the throne of grace, we must know, that Christ is a common Saviour, he is the Saviour of the World; and in regard of the all-sufficiency of his merits, there is not one of those, whose nature he took, unto whom his merits are not communicable; neither is there any one, who in that

respect may not truly be said to be savable. *The promise is made to you, and to your children, and to all that be afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, Act.2.39.* Now if you desire to know, whether you be one of those, whom he doth call to believe in him, consider then whether or no, you be sensible of your misery, and burdened with your sins; whether your desire be to be eased of your sins, and to be partaker of Christ, and of those benefits and comforts that be in him. For if we be thus qualified, we may be confident that we are of the number of those, whom he doth

doth ſeriouſly invite to come unto him, and to depend upon him. And hereof you have a witneſs in your ſelf, and Gods own hand to ſhew for it, to your greater comfort. For theſe are his own words: Come unto me *all ye that labour and be heavy laden*, and I will give you reſt, *Mat.* 11.28. and again, *If any man thirſt*, let him come unto me and drink, *Joh.* 7.37. unto ſuch *thirſty ſouls* was Chriſt ſent, he came to ſpeak peace to ſuch as are *weary*, and *broken hearted*, and to ſet at liberty ſuch as are *bruiſed*. So that if we, finding what a miſery it is to be in ſin, and to want a Saviour, have

thereupon an earneſt deſire to be delivered from this miſery, we may be as ſure, that he calls upon us to come unto him, as if our very names were ſpecified in theſe invitations: being thus qualified, we may come boldly, and upon our comming ſhall be ſure to find reſt; but without this badge we have no warrant at all to expect a welcome. *They that do thus hunger and thriſt after righteouſneſs ſhall be filled; but they that be rich* in their own conceits, and are not ſenſible of any wants, *theſe he ſends empty away.*

The

The fourth Question.

But if I finde that I want this sorrow, what course should I take, to bring my heart to be humbled for my sins?

Answer.

To this end let a man examine himself by the Law of God. For by the Law is the knowledge of sin. And let him duly think upon that fearful curse of God, whereunto every the least sin doth make us liable. Let him diligently consider, how uglie and lothsome sin doth make us in the sight of God, and what

what a fearful thing it is to be deprived of the love of God and the joyes of Heaven, and what a misery it is to be exposed to the wrath of God, and the torments of Hell. Let him seriously ponder what a misery it is to lose the soul. Let him throughly weigh the nature of eternity, and the strictness of that account that is to come; and the severity of that sentence, which in that last and dreadful day shall be pronounced upon all impenitent sinners, when they shall be adjudged to that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels. All these are of sin-

gular use to wound our souls, and to affect our hearts with sorrow for our sins. It is the Law that makes way for the Gospel: for thus *John* the Baptist by denouncing the judgments of God upon wicked courses, prepared the way for our blessed Saviour. But especially let him consider how great things God hath done for him. For as there is no greater obligation to obedience, then the loving kindness of the Lord: so there is nothing that doth more aggravate our sins, & so consequently our misery; and therefore nothing that can tend more to the breaking of the heart, then the consideration

ration of the bounty and long ſuffering of God to us-ward. And this plainly appeares by that courſe which the Prophet *Nathan*, at the Lord's appointment took with *David*, 2 *Sam.* 12. for by ſetting before his eyes *Gods* many and wonderful mercies vouchſafed, and his own extreame ingratitude and ill requital of ſo great goodneſs, he was conſtrained to cry out with ſhame and ſorrow, *I have ſinned againſt the Lord.*

And amongſt all the mercies of God, there is none that doth more deſerve to take up all our thoughts, then that departure of Chriſt,

Christ, which he accomplished at *Jerusalem*; nether is there any thing that doth more tend, either to preserve us from sin, or to humble us for our failings, then the death of our Savior.

For suppose the Lord Jesus should present himself unto us, when we are about to commit any sin, or after we have done it, as he was hanging upon the Cross, with his sides scourged, his face buffetted, his hands and feet nailed, his head crowned with Thorns, his very heart pierced, his whole body upon the rack, and trickling down with drops of blood, and speaking unto us after

after this or the like manner:
"Behold, if ever ſorrows
"were like unto my ſor-
"rows; and yet all this was
"but the puniſhment of thy
"ſins. It is thy ſins that
"have brought me to all
"theſe torments; and canſt
"thou delight in that which
"was the cauſe of ſuch mi-
"ſery? All this have I done
"for thy good, and is this
"the requital of my love? I
"I have born thy ſins, that
"thou mighteſt be eaſed;
"mine hands were bound,
"that thine might be freed;
"my ſides were ſcourged,
"that thine might be ſpa-
"red; my cheeks were buf-
"fetted, that thine might
be

"be kiſt: my head was
"crowned with thorns, that
"thine might be crowned
"with glory; and is this
"thy kindneſs to thy friend,
"thus to return me hatred
"for my good will? haſt
"thou not put me to pains
"enough already, but that
"thou muſt rake in my
"wounds, and make a ſport
"of my miſery? or if thou
"wilt not pity me, yet pity
"thy ſelf. For can that be
"light to *thee*, which coſt *me*
"ſo heavy? or ſhalt *thou* eſ-
"ſcape the cup, that art a
"*ſinner*, when my beloved
"Father would not ſpare *me*
"that was but a *ſurety*?

Suppoſe (I ſay) that the
Lord

Lord *Jesus* ſhould preſent himſelf and ſpeak unto us, after this or the like manner, would not ſuch a ſight make our bowels to yearn, and ſuch words cut us to the very heart? Doubtleſs it were enough to make the dryeſt eyes to wiſh for tears of blood, and the hardeſt heart of the moſt obſtinate ſinner, to become in the midſt of his body like melting wax, thus to hear, and to look upon him whom they have pierced: yea it is impoſſible for any man to think on this, and to go on in ſin, but ſuch as could be content to crucifie again the Lord of glory.

And

And thus you see, what are the chiefest helps to humiliation, and by what meanes our hearts may be brought to be deeply affected with sorrow for our sins.

Hereupon a timorous heart will be ready to reply yet further after this manner.

The fifth Question.

BY this course, and by these and the like meditations, I confess that I have been brought in some measure to be sorry for my sins, and now I would fain be eased of them; and it is my desire to believe in Christ, *but I fear*

fear that as yet I am not enough humbled; *I fear I have not* so great a measure *of sorrow, as may make me capable of this invitation; and my heart is so hardned, that I cannot grieve and mourn for my sins so much as I should, and would do; and therefore I fear, that as yet I have no right to the comforts of the Gospel.*

Answer.

True it is, that sorrow for sinne makes ready an heart prepared for the *Lord*; and as usually in the course of nature, there is no birth without some pain: so in the work of grace, there is no re-

gene-

generation, (that of Infants in baptiſm excepted,) without ſome ſorrow. But as there are degrees of pain in the natural birth: ſo in the ſpiritual birth, there are degrees of ſorrow. Some women have a quick diſpatch, others have a more tedious travel: and ſo it is in the new birth, all are not pained alike. Some there be that go mourning all the day long, yea day after day, whereas unto others, heavineſs indures but as it were for a night, and joy commeth in the morning. Wee muſt know therefore, and that for our comfort, that it is not the *quantity*, but the quality

of

of ſorrow, that God looks after; neither matters it much, how great our ſorrow be, as how true it is.

If a youth, upon due examination had, be found fit for the Univerſity, his Tutor never demands how long he hath been at ſchool, how harſhly he hath been dealt withall, how often he hath been whipt, before he could come to that perfection; all that he looks after is, whether or no he be fit to be admitted: ſo it fares with us; the Law is our School-maſter to bring us unto Chriſt; and this it doth, partly by diſcovering unto us our ſins, whereby we ſee that we need

need a Saviour ; and partly by threatning of us with the curſe, whereby we are made more careful to look out after this Saviour, and more willing to accept of him, and for our own eaſe to ſubmit unto him, when once we have found him. Now when we can be content to accept of *Chriſt* upon any *terms*, then are we ready for him, then are we fit to be admitted into him. And when we do ſeek unto *Chriſt* for this admiſſion, he regards not ſo much, how long we were at School under the Law, how often we were laſhed by it, or how ſorely we have ſmarted under it : but all that he

looks after is, whether we be fit to come unto him. Consider therefore with your self, had you ever such a sight and sorrow for your sins, as made you weary of them; and out of love with them; and willing to be eased of them; and desirous of interest in *Christ*, and ready to accept of *Christ* upon any terms, rather then to go without him? is it your grief that you cannot be more sorrowful, and do not you desire as much to be kept from sin for the time to come, as to have all that pardoned that is past? Surely, if you stand thus affected, then are you fitted and made ready

dy for *Christ*; and whether your ſorrow were great or little, yet it is a token, that it was a true and a godly ſorrow, becauſe it worketh repentance unto ſalvation, never to be repented of.

It may be yet further objected, thus:

The ſixth Queſtion.

I Confeſs that I have been grieved for my ſins, and I have been deſirous to believe in Chriſt: *but I fear that my ſorrow is not good, nor my faith ſound, becauſe my obedience is ſo faulty: for I am not ſo willing to forſake all my ſins, nor ſo careful to yield* Chriſt *obedi-*

ence, as I ſhould be; or if I am willing ſo to do, yet mine infirmities and my failings are ſuch, and ſo many, that I fear my ſorrow, and my faith, are not ſuch as they ought to be.

Anſwer.

Certain it is, that ſorrow for ſin will nothing avail us without amendment of life; the wicked muſt *forſake* his ways, if he expect pardon, *Iſa.*55.7. And it is he that confeſſeth his ſins, and *forſaketh them*, that ſhall finde mercy, *Prov.*28.13. If we willingly allow our ſelves in the practice of *any thing* diſpleaſing unto *God*, our con-

di-

dition is dangerous. If we ſay that we abide in *Chriſt*, we muſt walk as he walked, or elſe we deceive our own ſouls, 1 *Joh.*2.6. If we ſay that we have fellowſhip with *God*, and yet walk in darkneſs, we lye, and the truth is not in us, 1 *Joh.*1.6. And if it be not our ſtudy and exerciſe to yield *Chriſt* an univerſal obedience, our Faith is but Preſumption, our Peace is but Security, our Hopes are but Shadows, and our Expectation will periſh.

But if we have *an hearty deſire, and a ſincere endeavour in all things to live honeſtly*, we may not from our fail-

ings and imperfections, presently conclude that we are not sanctified at all, that we have no faith, no interest in *Christ*, no love of *God* in us. For perfection is not to be attained unto, while we be in the body; but *sincerity* is that which may be had, and affords unto us matter of comfort; for the Lord loves them that do *follow after righteousness*, Prov. 15.9. And they whose sincere desire and endeavour it is to have respect to all the commandments, are accepted of him. If it be our unfained desire, study and endeavour, in obedience unto *Christ*, to do whatsoever he commandeth

eth; if it be our care to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God, and not wickedly to depart from him in any thing: I ſay, if it be our unfained deſire, ſtudy and endeavour ſo to do, we may ſafely conclude, notwithſtanding all our imperfections, that our ſorrow is good, and our faith ſound, and that our ſins are pardoned, & our ſervice is accepted, and our ſouls ſhall be ſaved. For in *Gods* account and acceptation, that goes for a *clean life* which is not ſtained with *wilful pollutions*, and whoſe obedience is extended

to the utmoſt of his knowledge, and hath withal a purpoſe to amend what God ſhall hereafter make him know to be ſinful; to that man is allowed the opinion of gracious.

See further of this point in anſwer to objection 16.

The ſeventh Queſtion.

IF theſe things be ſo, I finde then that my condition at the preſent is good; and, if I were ſure to die in this eſtate, I make no doubt but I ſhould be happy. But I fear that I ſhall not continue in this condition; for my enemies are many, and mighty, and crafty, and watchful, and

I my ſelf am prone to ſin, and apt to fall from my own ſtedfaſtneſs; and I finde by experience that many who have begun in the Spirit, have ended in the fleſh, and their later ends have been worſe then their beginnings. This makes me to fear that I ſhall not continue faithful unto the death; and yet without this continuance, I ſhall never obtain the crown of life.

Anſwer.

All theſe things I confeſs are true; ſuch are our enemies, ſuch is our weakneſs; and the miſery of thoſe that do turn back from the Holy Commandment given unto

them; is ſuch, that it had been better for them not to have known the way of truth, 2 *Pet.*2.21. for they ſhall loſe thoſe things that they have done, and their portion ſhall be with unbelievers. So that a man cannot chuſe but have cauſe to fear. Nevertheleſs there is comfort in *God* againſt *this* fear alſo; yea, *this very fear of falling away* hath in it matter of conſolation, for it is a means to keep us from departing from *God*, *Jer.*32.40. *And I will make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* Ma-

Many there be that having begun well, do yet at length grow weary of well doing, and ſo loſe what they have done; and therefore let him that thinketh that he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall: But yet let not our hearts be troubled, let us not be diſmay'd with fear; for the perſeverance of ſuch as are *juſtified and ſanctified in deed and in truth*, is certain, and the foundation of *God* ſtandeth ſure, the *Lord* knoweth who are his, and he knoweth how to deliver them out of temptation. In further anſwer to this objection, and the better to comfort us againſt this fear, take ſpecial notice

of

of theſe Texts of Scripture, 1 *Pet.* 1.5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time.* Joh. 10, 27,28,29. *My ſheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater then all: nd no man is alle to pluck them out of my Fathers hand.* 2 Chr. 16.9. *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them whoſe heart is perfect towards him.*

The

The eighth Question.

But if the perseverance and so salvation of such as are in deed and in truth *the Saints of God, be so sure and certain, what mean those frequent caveats which we meet with in the Scripture? what mean those frequent exhortations to perseverance?*

Answer.

The perseverance of such is sure and certain, howbeit *God* brings it to pass by means; it is wrought in them by *God*, and yet their own endeavors also are required; and

and theſe caveats and exhortations are the means which God hath ſanctified for the exciting of their endeavors, and for their preſervation from Apoſtacy.

Caveats we have many, and many threatnings; exhortations many, and many promiſes; ſuch as are, *Take heed to your ſelves. Watch in all things. Be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, continue faithful unto the death, and I will give thee the crown of life. The later end of backſliders ſhall be worſe then their beginning*, &c. By which, and other like paſſages, we are not to think either that perſeverance is in our own power, or that the condition of

of *Gods peculiar people* is mutable in regard of him; but they do imply how prone we are to ſin, in regard of our ſelves; and they ſhew, that our own endeavours are required for the working out of our ſalvation; and they are the means ſanctified of *God*, for the preventing of ſin, and for the exciting of our care, and ſo for the preſerving of us unto his heavenly Kingdom.

And whereas we are ſaid to be kept by the power of God; We may not ſo underſtand it, as if we our ſelves might in the mean time ſit ſtill and do nothing: we are kept by *God*, and yet

we alſo muſt keep our ſelves: it is *God* that keepeth us, and yet we alſo muſt watch and pray. But we are ſaid to be kept by *God*, for our greater encouragement. For if our endeavours be ſincere, though they be but weak, yet they will be effectual, becauſe we have ſuch a mighty helper: and withal it is to teach us, to whom we ought to aſcribe all the glory when our endeavours become effectual. It is God that muſt have the glory of it, for it is by his power that we are kept, who worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure.

Be ſtrong therefore in the Lord,

Lord, and in the power of his might; he that is with us is mightier then they that be againſt us. And therefore we need not fear; for neither the power, nor the policy of hell ſhall prevaile againſt the people of God: and the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it, *Mat.* 16.18.

The ninth Queſtion.

I Make no doubt of the power of God, I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him: but I doubt of his will, I fear that he will not do it.

An-

Answer.

Surely this is a needleſs fear: for his love is everlaſting, his gifts and calling are without repentance; and whom he loveth, to the end he loveth them. And therefore *fear not, the Lord will not forſake his people, for his own Names ſake, becauſe it hath pleaſed him to make you his people*, 1 *Sam.* 12.22. So that if once he hath loved us ſo well as to ſet us apart for himſelf; he loveth himſelf better, then to forſake us. And though our unworthineſs deſerve that *God* ſhould deny us, yet his faithfulneſs is

ſuch, that he cannot deny himſelf.

Think therefore upon his love; meditate upon his power; call to minde his promiſe; forget not his truth; and commit the keeping of your ſoul unto him in well doing. Care you to do well, *God* will care for the reſt: for *He preſerveth the Souls of his Saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.* Pſal. 79.10.

The tenth Queſtion.

But ſeeing that mine own endeavours are required for the working out of my ſalvation; and ſeeing that my aſſurance

rance of ſalvation cannot be ſound, unleſs my care and diligence, in the conſtant uſing of all good means tending thereunto, be every way anſwerable: ſhew me, I pray you, by what means I may be enabled to continue patiently in well doing, that ſo at the laſt I may obtain eternal life.

Anſwer.

Hereunto many things are uſeful, the chiefeſt of which are theſe following.

1. *Labour to be ſincere*, by conſidering that all our ways are before *God*. To walk before *God* is the way to be perfect, and ſincerity is the way to perſeverance. For the righ-

righteous ſhall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, ſhall grow ſtronger & ſtronger, *Job* 17. 9. but he whoſe heart is not upright before *God*, will ſtart aſide in the time of tryal. See 1 *Joh.* 2. 19.

Labour to overcome the world, that ſo neither the cares and glory of it may too deeply affect us, nor yet the croſſes and troubles of it, too much affright us. For each of theſe are great hinderances to the practice of piety. Perſecution is that heat, that doth wither the word, & by it ſome are made to deny their maſter; and the cares of the world, are the thorns that choke

choke the word, & a mean whereby it becomes unfruitful. *For the love of money, is the root of all evil, which whi some have coveted after, the have erred from the faith,* 1 *Tim* 6.10. Arm your self therefore against both these; and to this end consider with your self, and think often upon that of our Saviour, *Mat.* 16.26. *What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* and upon that, *Mat.* 8.38. *He that is ashamed of me, of him will the Son of man be ashamed,* &c. and upon that 2 *Tim.* 2.12. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him: but if we deny him, he will also deny us.* And learn

to

to discern between those things that be seen, and the things that be not seen. For the things that be seen, are but temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 *Cor.*4.18.

3. *Watch in all things*, for our enemies are many, & security is dangerous, and sin is so deceitful, that it will quickly harden us: and this is certain, a man never yeelds to his own corrupt disposition for the committing of any evil, but he is ordinarily more willing to the second act, then to the first; & who then can tell how far he may go astray, that doth but once give way to his own corruption?

4. *La-*

4. *Labor to grow in grace*, and in the knowledge of our *Lord* and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, by considering that our labour cannot be in vain in the *Lord*. This *endeavour to grow in grace* is a special means to keep us from being drawn away with the error of the wicked: but standing still, is in danger of turning back, & luke-warmness is the way to grow key-cold.

5. *Despise not propheſying* if you would not quench the Spirit; if we would not be weary of weldoing, we must wait upon the word: *For that is able to build us up, & to give us an inheritance among them that are ſanctified*. Act. 20. 32.

And

And laſtly, *we muſt pray without ceaſing*, that he who hath begun a good work in us, would alſo finiſh it, and grant that our whole Spirit, Soul and Body may be kept blameleſs unto the coming of our *Lord Jeſus*. This is the way to continue in well doing, and ſo running we ſhall obtain.

The eleventh Queſtion.

But though my ſoul may be cared for, yet my body may be in want. I want already many things that be neceſſary; or at leaſt I fear that I ſhall want ſuch things as be needful for me; and this fear makes my life the more uncomfortable.

Answer.

Doubtleſs, if our ſouls be cared for, other things may the leſs trouble us; howbeit againſt thoſe things alſo there is matter of comfort in *Jeſus Chriſt*. He that regards the ſoul, will not neglect the body; and he knows what we have need of: and if we be of his family, he will be ſure to provide for us. He is *able* enough to help us, for the whole earth is the *Lords*, and the fulneſs thereof: and of his *will* we have no cauſe to doubt, for he hath promiſed that if we ſeek firſt the kingdom of *God*, and his righteouſneſs,

ouſneſs, *all theſe things* ſhall be added as it were over and above, and into the bargain, *Mat.*6.33. and he hath ſaid, that he will withhold *no good thing* from them that fear him, *Pſ.*34.9,10. Whereupon we may ſafely conclude, that if he keep any thing from us, it will be good for us to be without it: ſo that we may well ſay with the Prophet *David*, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I cannot want*, Pſ.23. 1. For he *that hath given us* Chriſt, *how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Rom.8.32.

The twelfth Question.

I Have been a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief; I have gone through much miſery already, and many are the croſſes and troubles that are upon me at the preſent, and I fear that there be more and worſe yet to come: ſo that ſometimes I begin to think that the Lord doth not love me, and I am ready to doubt what will become of me; and I fear that my patience will one day be tried, and that I ſhall faint in the day of evil. Shew me therefore, I pray you, how I may be comforted againſt this fear, and how I may be enabled to wade through all with Chriſtian patience.

An-

Answer.

True it is, that the crosses and troubles, which men shall meet withal in the way to heaven, are matters of offence, and unto some they are very powerful, turning them back from the hope laid before them, to the embracing of this present world. But if we would think upon things aright, in the midst of misery, we should have comforts enough to refresh our souls. Neither is there any trouble that can befal us, in the midst of which they have not matter of strong consolation, *yea justified by*

faith, are at peace with God, through Jesus Christ.

Now to the end that we may be the better comforted against all crosses, let us make use of these few considerations following.

1. Consider that it is no new or strange thing to be exercised with afflictions; neither are crosses and troubles *of themselves* an argument of *Gods* hatred, but rather a token of his love, & a witness of our adoption, if we bear them patiently, and make good use of them. There is not any affliction incident to the nature of man, which some one or other, even of *Gods* own dear servants and chil-

children, have not been exercised withal. Look upon *David*, and *Jacob*, and *Joseph*, and *Job*, & *Paul*, & all that cloud of Witnesses made mention of *Heb.* 11. and we shall find, that through *many afflictions*, they all entred into the kingdom of *God*. Nay, look upon the Captain of our salvation, and we shall finde, that even he himself was made *perfect through sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. and this must needs be a special means to enable us to bear all with the greater patience, when we shall know & consider, that though our afflictions be for number many, & for nature grievous, yet they are but the measure of our Betters. D 4 2. Con-

2. Consider that *God* hath promised never to leave us nor forsake us, *Heb.* 13.5. and his presence alone is support sufficient even in the worst of miseries. How can *Jacob* be afraid to go down into *Egypt*, when *God* himself hath said, he will go with him? *Gen.* 46. 34. *God* hath made the like promise unto us, and therefore if he bid us go into troubles; if he command us to walk even through the valley of the shadow of death, yet we need fear no evil, as long as he is with us: for, *if God be with us, who can be against us?* Rom. 8. 31.

3. Consider, that unto such as do believe in *Christ*, the na-

nature of afflictions is wholly altered; for their sting is pul'd out, & their bitterness is allayed: they may savour of *anger*, of *wrath* they do not: *crosses* they may be, *curses* they are not: they may be *chastisements* for our correction, but they are not *judgments* for our confusion. For *Christ* hath suffered *whatever wrath* was due unto us by reason of our sins: and if we be once reconciled unto *God* by faith in *Christ*, there is more matter of comfort in the assurance of his love, then there can be of dejection in the greatest trouble.

4. Consider that *God* intends nothing but good unto us in

his ſharpeſt dealings with us: for it is all to humble us, and to prove us, and to do us good at our later end; all is for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs. For *hereby* he reforms what hath *been amiſs* in us in times paſt; *hereby our iniquity ſhall be purged, and this is the fruit, to take away our ſin*, Iſa. 27.9.

Hereby he prevents ſin in us for the time to come, as he did S. *Paul*, unto whom there was ſent the meſſenger of Satan to buffet him, leſt he ſhould have been exalted above meaſure, 2 *Cor.* 12.7.

Hereby he doth wean us from the love of the world and worldly vanities. As long as

as all goes well with us, we are ready to say with S. *Peter*, *It is good to be here*: but when once we begin to be afflicted, then presently with the *Prodigal*, our *mindes are homewards*.

Hereby he deals with us as the husbandman doth by the Vine, he pares and prunes us, to make us the more fruitful, *Joh.* 15.2.

Hereby he doth exercise our faith and patience, & makes trial of our sincerity, as he did by *Job*. And so in this he lays the ground of our greater glory: for greater afflictions require greater patience; and the greater our patience is, the greater shall be our future happiness.

And

And the consideration of this must needs be a means to perswade us to patience: for if we can willingly endure smarting-water for the clearing of our eyes; & bitter pills, and sharp lances for the health of our bodies: much more ought we to bear with patience the smarting hand of Almighty *God* for the health of our souls. There is no affliction indeed joyous, for the present, but grievous; but after it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness to such as are exercised thereby, *Heb.* 12. 11.

Consider that if we do continue faithful unto the death, we shall receive a crown

crown of life. And if we do but have an eie to *that recompence of reward*, we ſhall eaſily be drawn, as *Moſes* was, to eſteem the *reproach* of *Chriſt* greater riches then the treaſures of *Egypt*; and to chuſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of *God*, then to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, *Heb.* 11.25,26. For the happineſs of that kingdom, which is to come, is ſuch, that our bleſſed Saviour accounts it matter of *comfort* againſt all *fear* whatſoever, as it doth plainly appear by thoſe words of his, *Luke* 12. 32. *Fear not little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleaſure to give you the kingdom.*

dom. Where the only argument that he makes use of for the encouraging of his little flock, is the hopes of the Kingdom. And again by that place, *Mat.*5.11,12. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsly for my sake. Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* Wherein our Saviour doth hearten his Disciples against Persecution, only upon this ground, because their reward should be great in heaven. And surely in S. *Paul's* computation, the present afflicti-

fliction is not worthy the ſpeaking of, in regard of that glory that ſhall be revealed. *Rom.* 8. 18. neither is there indeed, any compariſon at all between them; for the one is but a *light & momentany affliction*, the other is a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. So that this goodneſs of *God* in the Land of the living, is enough to keep us from fainting under the heavieſt burden: for though our outward man decay, yet while we have an eye to this joy ſet before us, our inward man will be renewed day by day. Fitly therefore is the hope of this happineſs, called the *Anchor*

of the ſoul, and the *Helmet of ſalvation*; for by this *Anchor* we are preſerved in the deep waters, by this *helmet* we are protected in the times of danger; and by flying unto this *hope*, we are ſure to finde refuge in the day of evil.

And thus we may be comforted againſt evils preſent. Now as for thoſe that are yet to come, we may thus reſolve, *either they ſhall not come at all*: for *God* will ſtand between us & harm, and *keep* us quiet from fear of evil: without his providence nothing can befall us, and therefore nothing ſhall befal us to do us hurt: for he is a *God* that delighteth in the proſperity of his ſervants. Or

Or if they do come, *yet the Lord will deliver us out of all:* there ſhall be an end. Enlargement will come, and he will deliver his people, even becauſe he hath a favor unto them.

And in the mean time, *he will ſupport us in them,* till deliverance do come: & his grace will be ſufficient for us. *For God is faithful, & will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able: but with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it,* 1Co.10.13. And *he will alſo give us benefit by them:* for he maketh all to work together for good, to thoſe that love him, *Rom.*8. 28. And thus we may be com-

comforted againſt our fears alſo. In a word, there's none can know the way to heaven, better then he that dwels there. And therefore which way ſoever God leads us, it is ſafe to follow him. The uneaſineſs of the way, makes us think that it is the fartheſt way about; but the Lord knowes it is the next way home. And whatſoever they ſeem to us, yet *all the ways of the Lord are mercy & truth, unto ſuch as keep his Covenant, & his teſtimonies.* Pſal. 25. 10.

The thirteen Queſtion.

MY troubles are great, exceeding weighty and burdenſome, and there are no ſor-

rows

rows like unto my sorrows; and this is that, that doth so break my heart, & drink up my spirit.

Answer.

This is answered in a word. It is but a conceit of our own, to think our own troubles the worst, when as indeed they are but *common* temptations: but say the worst, grant that there be none like them; yet if we shall compare them either with that which we have deserved; or with that which *Christ* himself for us hath suffered; or with that weight of glory that shall be revealed, we shall then esteem them all as nothing. And as great

great as they are, if we would but only look up and consider duly from whence they come, even that alone would be enough to make us patient: for thus was it with *David*, he was dumb and opened not his mouth, considering who did it, *Psal.* 39. 9.

The fourteenth Question.

But my affliction is such, that I am kept from enjoying the liberty of the house of God, and from praysing him in the congregation.

Answer.

This must needs be troublesome to minds well affected; howbeit if *God* himself re-

reſtrains us, we may then be ſure that he requires not our preſence. And in ſuch a caſe, if our deſires be with the congregation, even that deſire will be ſufficient. Neither is the Lord ſo confined to the congregation, but that he is near to all, that call upon him faithfully whereſoever they be, when neceſſity, and not neglect is the reaſon of their abſence. And beſides all this, if at any time, by reaſon of age or ſickneſs, we are not able to do thoſe things which we do deſire, and did perform in the times of our health and ſtrength, then ſhall a willing mind be well pleaſing unto God, and

good

good desires shall be accepted. Yea furthermore, this we must know for our consolation, that a patient submitting to the good will of *God*, is a *worshipping of him*, as appears by that, *Job* 1.20,21. where *Job* is said to worship *God*, when he did with patience and contentedness submit unto him. This is indeed, a glorifying of God, and herein we acknowledg him to be our God, and in thus submitting we shall performe unto God as good service as ever we did in all our lives. For this is the passive part of true obedience, and the tryal of sincerity in other things. To serve the Lord when all goes well

well with us, is much; and it is altogether as much, if not more, to reſolve to truſt in him, though he ſhould kill us. And if we can with *Job* hold faſt our righteouſneſs, and in the hour of temptation not fall away, this is a true note of pure religion, and a manifeſt argument of ſincerity and truth.

The fifteenth Queſtion.

AND yet after all this I muſt die; and when a few years are come, I ſhall go the way whence I ſhall not return: and the fear of death doth much amaze me.

An-

Answer.

Verily there is no solid reason why it should: for God hath given us victory over death it self, through our Lord *Jesus Christ*. The death of *Christ* was the death of death. Death fastning upon him, to whom it was not due, lost it's sting, and so became less able to hurt those that had deserved it. *Christ* hath puld out the sting of death, by dying for sin; so that now, like a Bee, or Snake without a sting, it may buzze about us and affright us, but it cannot hurt us. All the hurt that death can

can do to ſuch as believe in the Lord *Jeſus*, is to free them out of priſon, to put an end to their days of ſin, to carry them home, to their fathers houſe, to let them in to their maſters joy, to pull down thoſe mouldring cottages, wherein they dwell, and to build them up to immortality. For if we believe that *Jeſus* died and roſe again, them alſo that ſleep in *Jeſus*, ſhall God bring with him, and they ſhall be for ever with the Lord. And of this Happineſs the worſt kinde of Death, that can befall us, cannot deprive us. A Man may die in

Poverty, he may die with Extreamity of Torments, he may die by common Calamities, and yet he may die in Faith; and ſo dying, his End ſhall be Peace: *For bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, even ſo ſaith the Spirit*, &c. *Rev.* 14. 13. So that if we did but throughly underſtand the Nature of Death, and what it is to the People of God, we ſhould be ſo far from being afraid of it, that with Saint *Paul*, we ſhould rather deſire to be diſſolved, becauſe then we ſhould be with Chriſt, which is the beſt of all.

To ſhut up this Point, and

and ſo likewiſe the whole matter concerning Afflictions, this let me adde to all the reſt, That if we do deſire to get Good by theſe Meditations, and to be upheld with Comfort in the time of Trouble, we muſt *Continue inſtant in Prayer*. This is that Receipt, which the Holy Ghoſt preſcribes to all ſorts of Perſons, againſt all manner of Grievances whatſoever: *James* 5. 23. This is that Remedy that is alwayes at Hand, and never out of Seaſon. Yea, This is that Meſſenger, which being diſpatched aright, was never ſent em-

pty away. Believe it, If a Man were in a caſe more deſperate then Death, in a place worſe then Hell, yet if there he could pray heartily, he ſhould finde Comfort and Strength, even beyond Hope: for our Prayers uſe to be with the utmoſt of our Hopes, if not beyond them; and yet God doth uſe to be better to us then our Prayers.

The ſixteenth Queſtion.

I See now that there is matter enough of ſolid Comfort in the Word of God. But the uneveneſs of my walking makes me to doubt, that

I have no Part nor Portion in those precious Promises, which God *hath made unto his People.*

Answer.

Promises I confess that are misapplied, can afford to the Soul no solid Comfort. But from our Failings we may not presently conclude, That they do not at all belong to us: for God looks upon the Heart; and, where Ability is wanting, the Will is accepted.

Are not your Failings your Grief? are they not besides your Will? are they

not contrary to the current of your Desires, and the main bent of your Resolutions and Endeavours? is it not your Endeavour to do the Will of God, though it cost you the parting with the sweetest Sins, even your own Iniquity? and is it not your Resolution, that you will not wickedly Depart from God? if it be so, then notwithstanding your Failings, you may say with *David*, *I have kept thy word*: for though this be not such a measure of keeping as the law requireth, yet it is such a keeping as God accepteth: for he accounteth such as keep themselves from wil-

wilful ſins, upright and innocent, through *Chriſt* their ſtrength and their Redeemer, as appears by that paſſage, *Pſal.* 19.13.

And this is a true rule, whereby to proceed in the judging of our ſelves. If a man, that believes in *Chriſt* continues in an unknown ſin, that cannot hinder the uprightneſs of his heart, ſo the ignorance be not wilful; but the leaſt touch of knowledge or wilfulneſs mars ſincerity. So that if our failings be not wilful, though they be many, yet they cannot hinder our intereſt in the promiſes of God.

And what can we now ob-

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ject more? Do we doubt the truth of all these promises? surely we need not: for God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? hath he said, and shall it not come to pass? was he ever yet worse then his word? and have not we had experience of his love, as well upon our selves as others? is he not the faithful and true witness, and a God that is most zealous of his own glory? why then are we disquieted? and why are our hearts dejected within us? still trust in God, make straight steps to your feet: pray for faith

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in the promiſes, and ſtir up your ſelf to take hold of *God*, tarry the Lords leaſure, and fear not; light is *ſown* for the righteous, and gladneſs for ſuch as be upright in heart; it may lie buried in the ground out of ſight for a ſeaſon, it may be ſomewhat long in coming up, and very unlikely to come to any perfection: nevertheleſs, in *due ſeaſon* we ſhall reape, if we faint not. And therefore caſt not away your confidence. For the worſt is paſt, the good is begun, the beſt is at hand: lift up therefore the hands that hang down, and ſtrengthen the feeble knees; and run with

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patience the race ſet before us; and being partakers of ſuch precious promiſes, let us think upon them, believe in them, and live in them: and in ſo doing, we ſhall rejoyce with joy unſpeakable and full of glory.

Hear the the ſum of all. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit, Rom.* 8. 1. *There is no condemnation,* & there's our comfort: the ground hereof, is *Chriſt*; the way unto it, is by faith to be in him; the evidence of it, is *to walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit.* In the matter of merit, *Chriſt* is all; in matter of intereſt

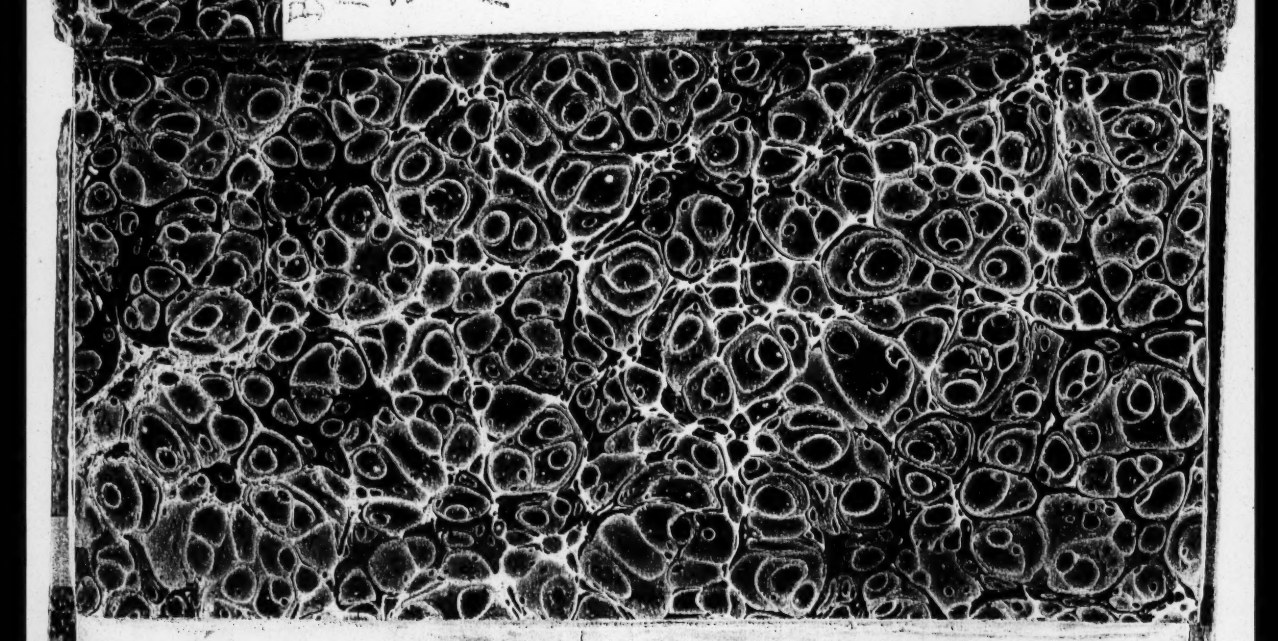
tereſt and application, faith is all; in matter of evidence and manifeſtation, *new obedience* is all. Nothing can free us from condemnation, but *Chriſt*; nothing can give us intereſt in *Chriſt*, but *faith*; nothing can aſſure us that we do truly believe in *Chriſt*, and ſhall be delivered from condemnation, but a care to be obedient unto *Chriſt* in all things: wherefore let us ſo believe, and ſo live: for as many as walk according to this rule, peace ſhall be upon them, and upon the *Iſrael* of God.

Now the God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound

bound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghoſt, *Amen* and *Amen*.

In the multitude of the thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul, Pſal. 94. 19.

FINIS.



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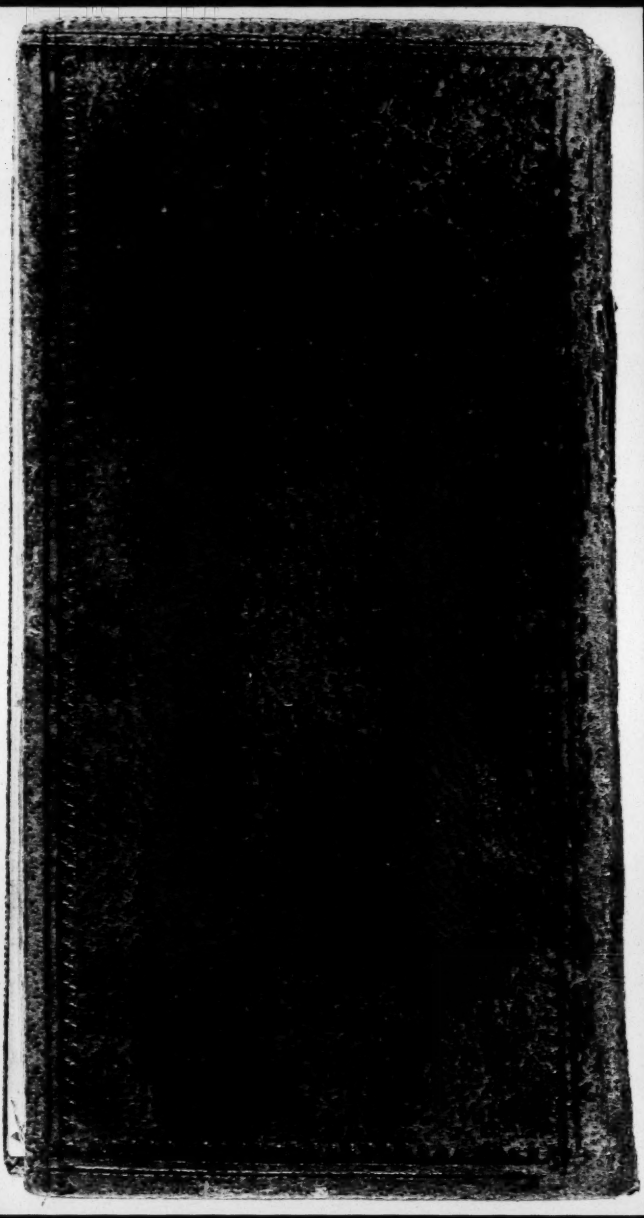
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